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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study of secondary school department heads was to measure their level of competency in relationship to the perceived importance of leadership responsibilities. Any information acquired could then serve as a basis for inservice programs directed at improving their competence. The instrument used to measure perceived discrepancies between importance and competence was a set of 30 tasks organized into four leadership categories: education, supervision, organization, and administration. A self-evaluation checklist was distributed to 76 secondary school department heads. Results showed a substantial difference between importance and competence in three areas: human relations, educational planning, and staffing management. Department heads judged these areas to be important, yet they consider themselves to be less competent than they would like to be in fulfilling them, which could make inservice programs desirable. Also, neither years of experience as a department head nor standard masters degree programs were shown to have any regressing effect on the differences between perceived importance versus competence. (Author/ID)

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LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES FOR DEPARTMENT HEADS: NEEDED AREAS FOR INSERVICE EDUCATION

Principals of secondary schools, overloaded with administrative tasks, have traditionally relied upon subject matter department heads to exert educational leadership within their departments. In the recent clamor for accountability to the taxpaying public, this reliance is not only expedient but almost mandatory.

Duties assigned to department heads, however, cover a wide range of responsibilities, many of which are more administrative than academic. In a survey of fifty-seven secondary social studies department heads in suburban Cook, Lake, and DuPage counties in Illinois (1974)[1], G. Galin Berrier reported that all the subjects participate in employment interviews, develop curriculum guides and materials, conduct department meetings, and budget department funds. Over ninety percent of them reported responsibility for classroom visits leading to written teacher appraisals, for teacher assignments and schedules, and for selection of instructional materials. Other tasks reported less frequently were student teacher assignments and supervision, articulation with junior high schools and colleges, orientation of substitute teachers.

The question of level of competency in relationship to the perceived importance of leadership responsibilities has been raised by Thomas Sergiovanni (1977)[2]. He developed a self-evaluation checklist of competencies adapted from task descriptions listed by Ben Harris and John King and by Lloyd McCleary and Kenneth McIntyre. He organized a set of thirty tasks into four leadership categories: education, supervisory, organizational, and administrative. These categories were logically conceived without benefit of factor analysis.

The study reported in this article attempted to validate the four categories used by Sergiovanni and to uncover any significant differences between perceived importance and perceived competence of the thirty tasks. The underlying assumption of the study is that the information can serve as a basis for in-service programs, directed at improving the competence of secondary school department heads.

Description of the Study

The subjects of this study were seventy-six secondary school department heads drawn from three sources. The first source was English department heads who attended the National Conference for Secondary School English Department Chairpersons held in New York, November 1977. The second source was secondary department heads of various academic areas who attended a conference especially designed to meet their needs which was sponsored by the Southwest Ohio Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, held in West Carrolton, Ohio, March 1978. A third source was the English department heads in the public, private, and parochial secondary schools for Hamilton County.

The instrument used to measure perceived discrepancies between importance and competence was the set of thirty tasks or competencies listed by Thomas Sergiovanni in his Handbook for Effective Department Leadership, pages 14-18. These tasks were presented to the subjects in the form of thirty cards, each itemizing one task numbered in arbitrary sequence crossing the four categories used by Sergiovanni. Each subject sorted the cards twice. Sort I gave a conceptual representation of the relative importance of each task. Sort II represented the participants' perceptions of their own competence with each task. Participants ranked the tasks in five piles, ranging from the most important to least important, from the most competent to least competent. They were directed to place

as many cards as needed in each pile but no fewer than one. This Q-sort procedure was used to force a decision-making process in the ranking of the tasks which the use of a Likert scale might have aborted. Each item was assigned two scores, one for importance (1 to 5 corresponding to the appropriate pile member) and one for competence (1 to 5).

The hypotheses to be tested were:

1. The tasks will cluster into factors corresponding to Sergiovanni's four categories;
2. There will be no significant differences (p less than .05) between perceived importance and competence on each identified factor;
3. Years of experience as department head will not affect the perception as to importance of tasks, holding steady confidence in their ability to carry out the tasks;
4. Level of education will not affect the perception as to importance of tasks, holding steady confidence in their ability to carry out the tasks.

Results of Analysis

To test the first hypothesis, the data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Orthogonal factors were extracted using Principal Components Analysis followed by a Verimax rotation. Six factors on the importance ranking yielded an Eigenvalue greater than 1.0.

TABLE 1 - SIGNIFICANT FACTORS ON IMPORTANCE RANKING

Factor	Eigenvalue
1	4.9696
2	2.3848
3	1.9456
4	1.5461
5	1.2256
6	1.0332

Tasks loading at .4000 or higher were assigned to one of the six factors. No item loaded on more than one factor while some factors did not load on any of the six factors. These six factors were then ranked according to the average of the mean importance of each of the components. This ranking is recorded in Table 2.

TABLE 2 - RANKING OF IMPORTANCE FACTORS

Descriptive Label	Factor Number	Factor Means on Importance Ranking
Human Relations	I	2.1057
Educational Planning	II	2.1165
Staffing Management	III	2.3451
Program Management	IV	2.7729
Financial Management	V	2.8819
Financial Planning	VI	3.5902

The clustering of tasks cuts across the four categories of Sergiovanni, with seven of the tasks not loading on any factor. This relationship is shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3 - RELATIONSHIPS OF IMPORTANCE FACTORS OF SERGIOVANNI'S CATEGORIES

Category	Factor I	Factor II	Factor III	Factor IV	Factor V	Factor VI	NL
Educational	1	1	1	4			1
Supervisory	4	2	1				1
Organizational	2		1	1			3
Administrative		1			2	2	2
Total (k=30)	7	4	3	5	2	2	7

Thus the first hypothesis that factor analysis would yield categories equivalent to the logical categories put forward by Sergiovanni is rejected.

To test the second hypothesis, that there will be no significant differences (p less than .05) between perceived importance and competence for each identified factor, a multivariate test was made comparing to zero the difference scores attained. Difference scores are defined as importance minus competence and were computed for each subject. These scores were converted so that positive scores indicated that the perceived importance of the tasks were greater than the perceived competence. The overall multivariate test yielded significance at .05.

TABLE 4 - OVERALL MULTIVARIATE TEST

df	F-ratio	
70	7.4887 *	*$p < .05$

This means that the difference between importance and competence overall was not zero; that is, at least one factor had an importance minus competence score which was significantly and substantially different from zero. The observed cell means are recorded in Table 5.

TABLE 5 - OBSERVED CELL MEANS

Dif 1	Dif 2	Dif 3	Dif 4	Dif 5	Dif 6
.377803	.259868	.307066	.005263	-.578947	-.072368

Of the four difference scores indicating greater importance than competence, the first three have significant F values. Difference score 5 also has significant F value; however, this indicates high competence and low importance. Table 6 presents a summary of the six univariate ANOVA's.

TABLE 6 - SUMMARY TABLE OF SIX UNIVARIATE ANOVA's.

Variable	Descriptor	df	MS/EMS	F
Dif 1	Human Relations	1 75	10.8478 .496199	21.8619*
Dif 2	Educational Planning	1 75	5.1324 .709068	7.2382*
Dif 3	Staffing Management	1 75	7.1660 .645250	11.1058*
Dif 4	Program Management	1 75	0.0021 .696505	0.0030
Dif 5	Financial Management	1 75	25.4737 1.887017	13.4994*
Dif 6	Financial Planning	1 75	0.3980 2.024693	0.1966

*$p < .05$

Thus the hypothesis that there are no significant differences ($p < .05$) between perceived importance and competence is rejected for Difference Variables 1, 2, 3, and 5. The negative score of Dif 5 indicates less importance than competence.

The three variables indicating greater importance than competence were then submitted to a multivariate analysis of the main effects of years of experience as department head, of level of education, and of their interaction.

Forty-three subjects had five or fewer years of experience as department head; thirty-three had more than five years experience. The overall F-ratio for years of experience is reported in Table 7.

TABLE 7 - OVERALL MULTIVARIATE TEST OF EQUALITY OF MEAN VECTORS OF YEARS OF EXPERIENCE AS DEPARTMENT HEADS

df	F-Ratio
3, 70	0.0359

No significant differences ($p < .05$) of perceived competence between the two groups were noted. The three Univariate F-ratios, with 1 and 72 df, were also insignificant as expected. Thus the third hypothesis that years of experience as department head will not affect the perception of the imporance of tasks, holding steady confidence in their ability to carry out the tasks is accepted.

Thirty-one subjects possessed masters degrees; forty-five did not. The overall F-ratio for level of education is reported in Table 8.

TABLE 8 - OVERALL MULTIVARIATE TEST OF EQUALITY OF MEAN VICTORS OF LEVEL OF EDUCATION

df	F-Ratio
3, 70	0.5377

The F-ratio was not significant at the .05 level indicating that there is no difference on the subscales between department heads with master degrees as compared with those without master degrees. The three Univariate F-ratios, with 1 and 72 df, were also significant. Thus the fourth hypothesis that level of education will not affect the perception of importance of tasks, holding steady confidence in their ability to carry out the tasks is accepted.

The interaction between years of experience and levels of education was also analyzed. The F-ratio is reported in Table 9.

TABLE 9 - OVERALL MULTIVARIATE TEST OF EQUALITY OF MEAN VECTORS OF INTERACTION OF EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATION

df	F-Ratio
3,70	0.5839

The multivariate F-ratio was not significant at .05. Likewise the univariate F-ratios were not significant. Thus no significant differences attributable to the interaction between years of experience as department head and levels of education were determined.

Conclusions

Three conclusions may be drawn from the data. First, the instrument as used in this study did not measure the four categories listed by Sergiovanni. This could be an artifact of the way it was used here; nevertheless, more empirical investigation of the instrument is required.

Secondly, there is a substantial difference between importance and competence in three of the six task areas. These three areas are:

1. The area of human relations which involves working with groups of people pursuing educational purposes;
2. The area of educational planning which involves identifying conditions needed for the professional growth and self-actualization of individual teachers, applying decision-making models, and developing the department's educational program;
3. The area of staffing management which involves supervising in the clinical mode, delineating competencies for staff positions and engaging in selective recruitment activities.

Respondents ranked these areas higher in importance than they did in competence. It appears that department heads judge these areas to be important yet they consider themselves to be less competent than they would like to in fulfilling them. It is likely then, that inservice programs designed to improve competency in these areas would find a receptive audience with secondary school department heads.

Thirdly, neither years of experience as a department head nor standard master degree programs have any regressing effect on the differences between perceived importance versus competence on the three identified areas. This means that if the importance/competence gap is to be closed, specific in-service programs rather than general degree programs or reliance on experience may be a better way to accomplish this goal.

Notes

1. G. Galin Berrier, "What Does the Department Chairman Do?" Clearing House 48 (1974), 432-36.

2. Thomas Sergiovanni, Handbook for Effective Department Leadership (Boston, 1977), 14.